

Lithuania Pleads for Recognition

Baltic Republic Defies Gorbachev, Forms Government

By Michael Dobbs

Washington Post Foreign Service

MOSCOW, March 17—Lithuania, brushing aside a Kremlin demand to withdraw its declaration of independence, formed a new coalition government today and appealed for diplomatic recognition by democratic nations.

The appeal for international support was issued by the Lithuanian parliament only hours after President Mikhail Gorbachev set a deadline of Monday for Lithuania to reverse its decision to secede from the Soviet Union. It was signed by Vytautas Landsbergis, the leader of the independence movement Sajudis who was elected president of Lithuania last Sunday.

The United States, in common with many other Western nations, never recognized the incorporation of the Baltic states of Lithuania, Estonia and Latvia into the Soviet Union during World War II. But the White House has refrained from formally recognizing the new Lithuanian government on the grounds that it does not yet fully control Lithuanian territory.

[In Washington, a White House spokeswoman, Alixe Glen, said there is no change in the U.S. position on Lithuania, which calls for peaceful change and urges both Lithuania and the Soviet Union to work out their differences. President Bush has been trying to walk a narrow line between the historic commitment of the United States to Baltic independence and his desire not to provoke Gorbachev, staff writer David Hoffman reported from Washington.]

Today's appeal, which was addressed to "the governments of democratic nations" and telexed to Western news organizations in Moscow, said that Lithuania had returned to the "world family of independent democratic nations" and requested the "kind assistance" of the world community.

"An important sign of political and moral support would be the recognition of the laws and legislative acts adopted on March 11, 1990,

Lithuania Asking for Recognition

LITHUANIA, From A1

and the recognition of the new government of Lithuania. This we kindly request," the statement said, referring to the Lithuanian parliament's proclamation of the resumption of the prewar independence of the Lithuanian state.

In a speech to the Lithuanian parliament today, Landsbergis indicated that he would not retreat in the face of Gorbachev's ultimatum. The Soviet leader sent him a telegram Friday asking to be informed "within three days" how he intended to comply with a Kremlin resolution affirming that Soviet laws remain in effect in Lithuania.

The Soviet leader has ruled out the use of force to prevent Lithuania and other republics from seceding. But he still has a range of economic and political weapons at his disposal, including the declaration of direct presidential rule over the Baltic republic of 3.7 million people.

Amendments to the Soviet constitution adopted this week by the Congress of People's Deputies describe the president as the guarantor of the integrity of the Soviet



VYTAUTAS LANDSBERGIS
... signed appeal for recognition

Union. They also authorize him to introduce a state of emergency and "temporary presidential rule" in individual areas of the country "in the interests of ensuring the security of Soviet citizens."

During a debate in the congress this week, several deputies urged Gorbachev to consider imposing presidential rule in Lithuania. But

he is likely to view it as a last resort, particularly since the enabling legislation has not yet been adopted by the Soviet Union's standing parliament, or Supreme Soviet.

In his speech today, Landsbergis said that the independence declaration could not be reversed and that there could be no question of holding a referendum to confirm the decision.

"If we got involved in a discussion, we would be making a political mistake, as if we were admitting that the will of the people had not yet been expressed," he said.

The Lithuanian parliament today elected an economist, Kazimiera Prunskiene, as prime minister of a coalition government that includes both Sajudis and Communist ministers. The republic's Communist Party leader, Algirdas Brazauskas, who was defeated in the presidential election by Landsbergis, accepted the post of deputy prime minister.

In a telephone interview from the Lithuanian capital, Vilnius, earlier this week, Prunskiene said that the new government would attempt to assert its control over Lithuanian territory as quickly as possible.